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EDUCATIONAL NEWS AND EDITORIAL COMMENT

THE SURVEY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

The University of Wisconsin is at the present time undergoing a unique experience. It is being surveyed by the State Board of Public Affairs. The State Board of Public Affairs is a commission which was created some years ago for the purpose of studying the finances of the state and equalizing, in some measure, the financial burdens imposed upon the state treasury by different public organizations.

The academic world looks upon Wisconsin as the most successful institution in the United States in contributing to public, civic, and political life. Naturally, the activities of the university in public affairs have created strong, partisan views with regard to its efforts to influence state legislation and state distribution of funds. The superintendent of public education in the state, who is an *ex-officio* member of the Board of Regents, has made a persistent campaign of attack upon university policies. These various critical influences have finally expressed themselves in the survey which is now under way. The active agents of the survey are Mr. William Allen, known for his former connection with the Bureau of Municipal Research of New York City, and Mr. Farmer, who has been associated with Mr. Allen in a number of public surveys. Mr. Allen has exhibited a good deal of vigor in instituting and carrying on surveys of various sorts. The institution with which he was connected was once before employed by the Wisconsin Board of Public Affairs in a survey of the rural schools of the state of Wisconsin. His connection with the New York City survey has also been a subject of general knowledge, especially through his own public utterances on the matter.

One of the public documents that has appeared up to this time as a part of the survey is a pamphlet of questions sent to every member of the teaching staff of the university. Including the blank pages on which the members of the university faculty are to write their answers, this pamphlet is a forty-seven page document of large letter-head size. It contains about one hundred questions. Many of these questions are subdivided into six or seven parts. Casual inspection would lead one to believe that at least a full day's work is involved in making out the answers to the questions. Many of the questions are of a type to stimulate wholesome thinking about university organization. Many of the

questions will be very difficult, if not impossible, to answer. For example, it is asked, "What benefit has the answerer gained from the faculty meetings?" Another interesting general question which will probably be confusing to most of the members of the faculty is the following: "State specifically in what way your professional efficiency has been affected and how you have been helped in dealing with students, in methods of instruction, and subject-matter by (a) the president, (b) the dean, (c) the chairman, (d) the instructors in charge, (e) university scientific societies, (f) other official factors."

The writer is very clear in his own mind that it would be quite impossible for him to give any definite statement of the influence of his associates on the courses which he gives. The difficulty with a question of this sort is that it is more likely to bring out trivial and adverse criticisms than to get at the real essential relations of an institution, especially when the answers are to be tabulated and discussed by one whose acquaintance with university life is merely that of a student and a professional inquirer.

Other questions of the same type appear. For example, the question is raised how often members of the faculty have consulted with the president. This question would seem to be based on the assumption that the president of a university is acquainted in detail with the best methods of procedure in all of the different departments. However, the survey will undoubtedly be of service to universities and to the public.

The University of Wisconsin has, more than any of the other public institutions of its type, made an effort to get in contact with the people of the state. It is natural that it should be one of the first to be attacked by critics of university organization. A democratic community always has some difficulty in understanding its own institutions. The University of Wisconsin will make a large contribution if it can train the officials of the state of Wisconsin to understand something of its spirit and internal operations. There will be temporary inconveniences in fulfilling this mission. One hears, for example, at Madison of student examinations for the higher degrees which are invaded by the inquirers. Students are asked questions with regard to the value of different courses, and when they are reluctant to make answers it is said that the inquirers threaten to subpoena these students and make them answer questions as the state's witnesses. This sort of a device employed in an academic examination certainly has its advantages. It might be well to empower faculties of universities as official servants of the commonwealth to subpoena students for various purposes. Why not go a step farther

and allow universities to subpoena citizens? It would be interesting, for example, to authorize the members of the faculty whose research work is being critically scrutinized to draw in witnesses who could support the case in behalf of research.

It is understood that some of the inquirers in this case are very doubtful about the value of studies of ancient history and of the remoter fields of science. This doubt is natural enough on the part of those whose knowledge of such subjects is slight, and they undoubtedly represent a very important fraction of the American people. Germany does not have to persuade the whole body of its population of the value of research. Research progresses, therefore, in an imperial country with a good deal more rapidity than in our own country. It will be more difficult to teach the whole body of American sovereigns that research is worth while, but the University of Wisconsin is doing yeoman service in this direction and everyone connected with academic life will be hopeful as to the outcome.

It is rumored at Wisconsin that the department of education is receiving special attention from Mr. Allen and his co-workers and is likely to be criticized, especially for its experimental school. The value of the opinion which these gentlemen form of the work of the department of education will be doubted by many who know of their activities in New York and contrast the inquirers with the character and worth of the officers connected with the department of education. The state of Wisconsin has already expressed its confidence in the work of this department by giving a magnificent building for a laboratory school. If the surveyors are not able to understand the value of the laboratory school, the rest of the educational world will be able to judge the surveyors by this finding. It would be well for the state of Wisconsin to recognize that the earlier pronouncements of the gentlemen who are conspicuous in this survey on the Wisconsin rural schools are about as clear evidence that they are not competent to discuss school matters as could easily be produced. Anyone who is under the necessity of admitting connection with authorship of the Wisconsin Rural School Survey should at least provide himself with a rigorous course of training and experience before he attempts to comment again before an intelligent educational public on school matters. At the same time he furnishes a capital illustration of the difficulties encountered by experimental undertakings and scientific studies of every type. No one who is really interested in the development of education can fail to be thankful, therefore, that the opportunity presents itself of meeting early and in definite

form some of the types of opposition to scientific work which might otherwise grow in the uncertain background of uninformed opinion.

C. H. J.

THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

The report presented to the National Education Association by its committee on Vocational Education and Vocational Guidance invites constructive criticism. It is in response to this general invitation that the following editorial comments are made.

This committee was appointed to report to the Association "concerning vocational education and vocational guidance," and it decided to address itself to the phase of the question indicated by the title of the report, "Proposed Terminology." It is perhaps unwarranted to question the wisdom of the committee in determining that its greatest contribution could be made by formulating "certain definitions as to terms," but we cannot help feeling that something more constructive might have been undertaken in view of the committee's exceptional opportunity.

We recognize the need of a clear understanding of the terms used to define different types of vocational schools and believe that agreement as to the meaning of these terms would be of material benefit, but we believe that the formulating of definitions should follow, rather than precede, the creation of the various types, and that, when finally evolved, the definitions should actually describe the types, not seek to predetermine future developments.

All over the country has been heard the demand that education be brought into more immediate and intimate relations with the humbler occupations which form such a large part of the common experiences of everyday life. In the several sections of the country these experiences are widely different, and this demand is being met in a variety of ways. It is highly desirable that experimentation go on for some time without the stultifying effect of trying to adjust practice in one part of the country to a principle which has been developed under the peculiar conditions obtaining in another section. The report frankly states:

The suggestions made below as to the meaning and use of terms are based in part upon the theory and practice of vocational education in Massachusetts, more particularly as that has been influenced by the State Board of Education. The Board, being required by law to supervise various forms of vocational education, has found it necessary to evolve, and use consistently, a somewhat definite terminology.

We believe that the definitions given by the committee, instead of following the precedent of Massachusetts, where experimentation has been under way since 1906, ought to have been such as to stimulate initiative in all sections of the country by emphasizing the fundamental need of vocational education and of setting forth with great clearness the principles governing the efforts which are being made to meet those needs. Our criticism, therefore, is not of the definitions themselves so much as of the policy of attempting, by definitions, to standardize practices which are still in the early experimental stages.

Some of the definitions, however, appear to be given either in ignorance of, or with disregard for, the facts, as, for example, the definitions of "pre-vocational training." A number of cities have made use of this term, "pre-vocational," in their school legislation and have employed it with a considerable degree of uniformity. What is being done in these cities bears little resemblance to the "examples" or to the "definition" given in the report. The definition as given (p. 44) follows: "Pre-vocational training is a conscious attempt on the part of society to equip an individual to make an intelligent choice of occupation, by giving him an opportunity to undergo a series of typical practical experiences."

While the vocational guidance feature of pre-vocational work has been recognized, it has been of relatively little importance as compared with its function of motivating education for those of about fourteen years of age who have nearly decided to leave school for occupational life. An illustration taken from the Louisville, Kentucky, public schools is illuminating. The following quotations are from a document of the school.

They agreed that pre-vocational training required for their purpose could be taught by means of *any* trade that could be practically handled in the school-room.

Printing and cabinet-making were the trades chosen for the Louisville pre-vocational class. . . .

They [members of the class] were, therefore, carefully selected from among children who had applied for permits to work, or who would positively leave school within a year.

No child was permitted to enter this class if there was any intimation upon the part of the parents that further schooling was considered for the child.

These statements would be accepted by several other cities as indicative of the purpose of their "pre-vocational" work. It will be noted that the work described in the Louisville document will hardly "equip an individual to make an intelligent choice of occupation, by giving him

an opportunity to undergo a series of typical practical experiences." So far as there was any chance for selection it was made prior to entering the class.

A pre-legal course in college is not given to enable a student to choose between medicine, theology, and law, but is intended to give a better foundation for a subsequent legal training than some other academic course. The choice has been made already. In the same way the pre-vocational work of which we are speaking gives a better preparation for early vocational life than the regular work of grades seven and eight. The "choice" between schooling and work has been made in favor of the latter, and pre-vocational work is the work which, under the circumstances, gives the best immediate foundation for occupational experience.

Perhaps "pre-vocational" *ought* to mean what the committee says it does, but where the term has been used in school legislation it has designated a type of work which coincides quite closely with the example cited above and therefore differs materially from the committee's definition.

Another difficulty which arises from the formulation of such limiting definitions as those given by the committee is that the definitions themselves must be still further interpreted before they can be carried over into the realm of actual practice. A case in point is the experience of Indiana, where the statute, founded on the Massachusetts law, defines the different types of vocational schools, and the State Board of Education is obliged to interpret these definitions. The law states:

"Evening class" in industrial, agricultural, or domestic-science school or department shall mean a class giving such training as can be taken by persons already employed during the working-day, and which in order to be called vocational must in its instruction deal with the subject-matter of the day employment; but evening classes in domestic science relating to the home shall be open to all women over seventeen who are employed in any capacity during the day.

The State Board of Education says:

. . . the controlling purpose of an evening class in a state-aided vocational school must be "to fit the worker for more profitable employment in the occupation in which he is actually engaged." An evening school which provides instruction for wage-earners, designed to teach them another more remunerative occupation or trade or *one permitting a higher degree of skill, is not eligible for state aid.*

The law provides that "industrial education shall mean that form of vocational education which fits for the trades, crafts, and wage-earning pursuits,

including the occupation of girls and women carried on in stores, workshops, and other establishments"; also that "industrial, agricultural, or domestic science school or department shall mean an organization of courses, pupils, and teachers designed to give either industrial, agricultural, or domestic science education *as herein defined*, under a separate director or head."

Interpreting this law, the State Board of Education says:

In these schools a close relation must be maintained between theory and practice. There will be *no general departments* of arts or science, *no systematic work* in mathematics or drawing. . . . This being the final professional school for the industrial worker, the pupil's attendance at the school *should be cut as short* as may be consistent with a thorough training for the occupation or trade to be learned. . . . The shopwork must be conducted on a *productive* or commercial basis. . . .

It should be clear that schools organized on the above lines would be possible only under conditions which obtain in congested industrial communities. In the larger part of the country such definitions and interpretations would impede rather than impel progress in vocational education.

Fortunately the committee says:

Because of the unsettled condition of vocational education the committee is not yet prepared to recommend the adoption of the appended terminology by the National Education Association. It submits it rather as a provisional report in order to pave the way for a more adequate examination and discussion of the whole question. It is expected that during the next year contributions will be made by members of the National Education Association and others interested in vocational education, as a result of which a much more complete and adequate report can be presented later.

The committee, therefore, earnestly urges upon all members the necessity of helpful and constructive criticism in regard to this terminology. Whether your criticism is in the form of an indorsement or dissent, it will be equally welcome. It is requested, however, that if it be a dissent it be accompanied by constructive suggestions which can be sent to the chairman, and all of which will be considered in the preparation of a subsequent report.

It is our belief that, if definitions are desirable at this time, they should be so broadly framed as to stimulate interest in the general movement, ingenuity in experimentation, and intelligence in evaluating results. When the mass of information resulting from concrete experiences has assumed sufficient proportions, the formulation of definitions will be a relatively simple matter.

F. M. L.

REGENTS' EXAMINATION IN NEW YORK CITY HIGH SCHOOLS

The advisability of using the semiannual Regents' examinations is again being warmly discussed by school men in New York City. The opponents of these examinations claim that they do not meet the special needs of New York City so well as examinations devised by the teachers who have given the courses; that they encourage uniformity of work for all types of pupils in an age and in a city in which specialization and adaptation to individual and social differences and needs are demanding diversity; that the giving of two full weeks each year to conducting the examinations is an unwarranted waste of time and money; that the real work of the schools is neglected in preparation for the examinations and demoralized for a week or two thereafter; that they do not really test students' ability; that to nullify a good class record by a few hours of writing is unfair and absurd; that the test is not, as claimed, for the purpose of testing the efficiency of schools, since the results of the tests are not actually used in the active supervision of the work in the high schools; that the different schools change their ranks so surprisingly in different tests as to prove that the tests are useless for the purpose of testing the relative efficiency of schools; that they take the responsibility off teachers for planning rational twentieth-century courses; and that they encourage inertia and retention of courses organized as presupposed in the Regents' examinations.

The special protagonist of the Regents' system in his reply to objections urged evades the issue. He simply says that the question was decided in New York several decades ago, and argues the futility of taking up a thing again that has already been settled. He assumes that the world does not change; that a decision as to what is proper for one generation applies equally well to all generations thereafter. It is not again to be taken up and reconsidered in the light of new conditions. There are no new conditions. It is a waste of time, energy, and temper, and can result only in a reconfirmation of the former decision.

Now whatever the merits or demerits of the Regents' examinations, this position of the assistant commissioner of education for secondary schools is, in the twentieth century, simply untenable. Conditions are changing—and with bewildering rapidity. A thing that was justified by conditions twenty years ago may or may not be justified by conditions today. The only possible way to find out is to re-examine the whole situation. If there is still a strong case for the Regents' examinations, this ought to be the clear outcome of such an investigation. If conditions have so changed that they are no longer justified, the examinations

ought to be discontinued. Moreover, those responsible for the examinations should be the first ones to know whether the examinations are justified, and the first to propose their discontinuance if results are found to be negative. The argument that inertia should prevail is certainly a strange one for the educational world to adduce in this era of reformulation of the purposes, means, and methods of public education.

J. F. B.

REORGANIZATION OF THE HIGH SCHOOL
SPREAD OF THE 6-6-YEAR PLAN

For some years educators have advocated a division of the elementary- and high-school periods so as to bring the break between the two phases of education at the transition period characteristic of the age of twelve instead of coming at the age of fourteen or later, as at present. A number of experiments in this type of reorganization have been tried and the movement seems to be spreading. Dr. Ayers, of the Russell Sage Foundation, in his report on the survey of the school system of Springfield, Illinois, recommends the change to the so-called 6-6-year plan. Superintendent Bauman, of Quincy, Illinois, as reported in the *Quincy Herald*, recommends the organization of ninth grades as a step in the direction of this plan. Strong impetus has been given the movement in Michigan by encouragement from the University of Michigan.

ACTION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

The faculty of the University of Michigan has enacted a piece of legislation which makes possible the organization of the high school in such a manner as to enable the student to do advanced work and to gain credit for this work toward his Bachelor's degree. The following is the text of a circular which reports this action:

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

The following report was adopted by the Faculty of the Department of Literature, Science, and the Arts, June 15, 1914, and by the Regents, June 23, 1914:

To the President and Faculty of the Department of Literature, Science, and the Arts:

GENTLEMEN: Your Committee on the "Reorganization of the Public School System" submits the following resolutions for your approval:

Resolved:

1. That school authorities be encouraged to incorporate the seventh and eighth grades of the elementary school as an integral part of the high school, forming a six-year system.

2. That school authorities be recommended to organize the six-year high-school system into a *Junior High School* of three years and a *Senior High School* of three years as soon as local conditions will admit.

3. That graduates of six-year high-school courses be required to gain during the last three years at least eight of the fifteen units required for admission, two of which units shall be obtained during the Senior year.

4. That graduates of six-year high-school courses be permitted to apply for university credit *on examination*.

Resolved:

That students entering the University from a *Junior College*, organized as part of a city school system, may apply for admission on advanced standing, provided the course of study and the faculty meet the approval of the University.

Respectfully submitted

A. S. WHITNEY, *Chairman*
J. R. EFFINGER
J. L. MARKLEY
A. G. HALL
E. H. KRAUS
H. A. SANDERS
T. E. RANKIN

On the basis of a letter from Professor Whitney the interpretation of this action seems to be as follows: Seven of the fifteen units required for entrance may be gained during the junior high school, which includes what are now the first year of the high school and the seventh and eighth grades of the elementary school. Four of these units can be gained in the last year of the junior high school, and it is the opinion of Professor Whitney that three entrance units can be gained during the first two years. This leaves eight entrance units still to be gained during the three years of the senior high school. If the pupil continues to do work equivalent to four units a year he will, at the time of graduation from high school, have done the equivalent of a year's work which can be applied toward the Bachelor's degree at the university.

The only restriction which is made upon the acceptance of the advanced work by the university is that the student shall pass an examination upon it. This provision is merely a recognition of the fact that such advanced work in the high schools is still in an unorganized condition.

This legislation will doubtless serve as a strong impetus to the movement for the reorganization of the high schools in the state of Michigan, since it adds to the motives furnished by the needs of the lower schools themselves the reward of economy in time in gaining the university degree.

F. N. F.